DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 510 CS 217 375

AUTHOR White, Sheida; Vanneman, Alan
TITLE NAEP Scoring of Eighth-Grade Informative Writing.
INSTITUTION National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO NCES-2000-506
PUB DATE 2000-11-00
NOTE 7p.; Previous issues also titled "NAEP Facts." For the Writing Assessment scoring guide overview for grades four and twelve, see CS 217 374-376.
AVAILABLE FROM ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free). For full text: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
JOURNAL CIT NAEPfacts; v5 n2 Nov 2000
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Grade 8; Holistic Evaluation; Junior High Schools; *National Competency Tests; Scoring; *Standardized Tests; *Student Writing Models; *Writing Achievement; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *National Assessment of Educational Progress

ABSTRACT

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1998 Writing Assessment measured student writing performance at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. Scoring guides for three different writing purposes for each grade allowed scorers to objectively evaluate students' work. This issue of NAEPfacts includes an 8th-grade informative writing scoring guide, along with samples of student work at each of six levels of performance. (Author/RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 449 510

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

NAEPFACTS

Vol. 5 No. 2 November 2000

NAEP Scoring of Eighth-Grade Informative Writing

Abstract: *The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1998 Writing Assessment measured student writing performance at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. Scoring guides for three different writing purposes for each grade allowed scorers to objectively evaluate students' work. This issue of NAEPfacts includes an 8th-grade informative writing scoring guide, along with samples of student work at each of six levels of performance.*

The *NAEP Writing Framework*,[1] developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, determined that the NAEP 1998 Writing Assessment should require students in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades to write for three different purposes: *narrative*, *informative*, and *persuasive*. Student performance would be evaluated on the basis of responses to a variety of different topics within each purpose.

Most students in the 8th grade received two writing topics, or "prompts," and were given 25 minutes to write on each, although some received a single 50-minute topic. Each topic was classified as either *narrative*, *informative*, or *persuasive*. Twenty-three different topics were used in the 8th-grade assessment: twenty 25-minute topics and three 50-minute topics. Three 25-minute topics have been released to the public.[2]

Student writing samples were assessed according to a scoring guide that established six levels of performance, ranging from "Unsatisfactory" to "Excellent."[3] This issue of *NAEPfacts* includes the complete text of the 8th-grade "informative" scoring guide on page 2, examples of "informative" writing by 8th-graders at each of the six levels, and a discussion of how the scoring guide applies to the six student writing samples.

Focused Holistic Scoring

The scorers of the NAEP 1998 writing assessment used a scoring method described as "focused holistic scoring." This approach combines holistic and "primary trait" scoring. A strict holistic approach to the scoring of writing treats a writing task as a "springboard" for writing. A particular writing task is given to students as a stimulus to engage them and inspire them to write, and students' responses are scored in terms of the overall writing quality. "Primary trait" writing scoring, on the other hand, is concerned with how well students respond to a specific topic. For example, if students are asked to write about whether they like adventure movies, students who do not address the topic of adventure movies will receive lower scores than those who do.

The "focused holistic scoring approach" used by NAEP, as with all holistic approaches, requires scorers to rate the overall quality of the writing, regardless of how students choose to respond to specific aspects of a given topic. In contrast to some holistic approaches to the scoring of writing that offer very general guidelines, however, NAEP scorers were given detailed scoring guides that focused their attention on specific characteristics of students' writing (organization, development, syntax, and mechanics). In this sense, the "traits" of writing now at issue for NAEP writing scoring have shifted from a concern with topic-related traits of student responses to traits associated with overall quality of writing.

CS217375

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

NCES 2000–506

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Eighth-Grade Informative Writing Scoring Guide

1. **Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to respond to prompt, but provides little or no coherent information; may only paraphrase the prompt.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response.

2. **Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Presents fragmented information OR may be very repetitive OR may be very undeveloped.
- Is very disorganized; thoughts are tenuously connected OR the response is too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

3. **Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Presents some clear information, but is list-like, undeveloped, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is unevenly organized; the response may be disjointed.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

4. **Sufficient Response**

- Develops information with some details.
- Organized with ideas that are generally related, but has few or no transitions.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

5. **Skillful Response**

- Develops and shapes information with details in parts of the response.
- Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

6. **Excellent Response**

- Develops and shapes information with well-chosen details across the response.
- Is well organized with strong transitions.
- Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

The basic assumptions of the NAEP focused holistic scoring approach are given below:

- Each of the factors involved in writing is related to all others and that no one factor can be separated from the others.
- A writer is entitled to make some mistakes, given the 25-minute time limit, the lack of recourse to a dictionary, and the lack of time for reviewing and editing.
- Scorers should read supportively rather than critically.
- Scorers should read each response as a whole—without focusing on each mistake (but still being aware of them)—to judge the level of writing ability demonstrated by the student.

- After thorough training on the scoring of responses written on a given task, scorers should quickly read an entire response and assign a score based on the total impression conveyed by the response.
- Scorers should ignore their personal standards of what constitutes good writing and embrace the criteria of the scoring guide.

Informative Writing

Informative writing focuses primarily on the subject-matter element in communication. This type of writing is used to share knowledge and to convey messages, instructions, and ideas. Like all writing, informative writing may be filtered through the writer's impressions, understanding, and feelings. Used as a means of exploration, informative writing helps both the writer and the reader to learn new ideas and to reexamine old conclusions.

Informative writing may also involve reporting on events or experiences, or analyzing concepts and relationships, including developing hypotheses and generalizations. Any of these types of informative writing can be based on the writer's personal knowledge and experience, or on information newly presented to the writer that must be understood in order to complete a task. Usually, informative writing involves a mix of the familiar and the new, and both are clarified in the process of writing. Depending on the task, writing based on either personal experience or secondary information may span the range of thinking skills from recall to analysis to evaluation.

Eighth-grade students were given a number of informative topics in the 1998 Writing Assessment. The same informative scoring guide was used for all of these topics. This issue of *NAEPfacts* presents 8th-grade student writing samples at all six response levels, from "Unsatisfactory" to "Excellent," that students wrote about a proposed television show for teenagers. The complete text of the topic is as follows:

Designing a TV Show

A public television network is seeking ideas for a new series of shows that would be educational for teenagers. The series will include ten 1-hour episodes and will be shown once a week. Some of the titles under consideration are:

"Great Cities of the World"

"Women in History"

"Nature Walks"

"American Legends"

Choose one of these titles. Write a letter to the network president describing your ideas for a new educational series. In your letter, describe what one episode might be like. Use specific examples of what information you would include in the episode so the network president will be able to imagine what the series would be like.

1. Sample "Unsatisfactory" Response

Dear President,

I would like to do a brochure, on "Great Cities of the World" I need your opinion should I do it on New York, Tokyo, Tiawan, Los Angelos, or should I do all of them?

Always

Student

The "Unsatisfactory" rating was given to 3 percent of the responses to this topic. As the scoring guide on page 2 indicates, such responses were very undeveloped or very poorly written. In the "Unsatisfactory" response shown above, the student chooses one of the series titles provided in the topic and asks what to include, without presenting his or her ideas about what to show on the television series.

2. Sample "Insufficient" Response

Dear President

I think you should do the series on "Great City's of the World." If you did the series off of that title it would be best. You would get to learn about all the cities instead of just one city. Because teenagers could learn about other cities in other countries. That's why I think you should do the series on "Great City's of the World."

The "Insufficient" rating was given to 13 percent of the responses to this topic. Such responses supplied only minimal information about the student's choice of an educational television series. In the example shown above, the student provides a justification for the series: "You would get to learn about all the cities instead of just one city." However, the student does not develop that justification by describing the substance of the show.

3. Sample "Uneven" Response

Dear Network President,

I think you should do a show on American legends. You can tell about real people like George Washington or

Abraham Lincon. You might want to consider using fictional characters such as Paul Bunyan or Johnny Appleseed. You might want to do shorter section on all of the less popular Presidents like Teddy Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson.

I would put in how George Washington helped win the Revolutionary War or how he made a good President You could also tell how John F. Kennedy was assasianated or how Abraham Lincon helped in the Cival War.

The "Uneven" rating was given to 40 percent of the responses to this topic. In many of these responses, students mentioned a few specific elements to be presented on the television series, but listed rather than developed them. In the "Uneven" paper shown above, the student enumerates various "American Legends" to be presented, along with an identifying detail or two about George Washington, John F. Kennedy, and Abraham Lincoln, for example: "You could also tell how John F. Kennedy was assasianated or how Abraham Lincon helped in the Cival War." The student, however, does not develop points, and his or her command of the mechanics of writing is uneven.

4. Sample "Sufficient" Response

Dear Mr. President,

I think you should have a show about "Women in history." A lot of people want to know about women and what they've done to help our country. There have been many women heroes, and they should be recognized. You could do the show like Wishbone, except all the shows be about women in history instead of characters from a book. An idea for a show is Anne Frank. You could go to the place where they hid for so long and do the show right there. Everyone will get the chance to see how Anne lived. A lot of people haven't heard or seen her story. Well, it's time they do! So, please take into consideration my ideas and respond when you make your decision.

Students at the upper score levels ("Sufficient" or better) provided organized responses with illustrative details. Some students provided descriptions of an entire episode, down to the dialogue and camera angles.

The "Sufficient" rating was given to 34 percent of the responses to this topic. Such responses were organized and provided some details. In the response shown above, the student's writing is clear, accurate, and organized.

5. Sample "Skillful" Response

Dear Network President,

I think that I have a new show for your network. It's called Great Cities of the World. The show is about four teenagers, around the ages of fourteen to seventeen who travel around the world. In each show they travel to two cities. When they arrive in the city they will first talk about the cities history and what it is like now in the present. They talk about some of the tradions of the city. For example if the students went to Paris, France they would talk about France's past and some of the things they do in there daily lives. They could talk about the people, what they look like and their styles. To keep the show interesting you can show things such as we learn how to say a word from their language or meet many different people from their city. Also to keep the show interesting they can have problems

The "Skillful" rating was given to 8 percent of the responses to this topic. In such responses, students used detail and elaboration in parts of the response, with transitions to connect ideas. In the response shown above, the student specifies who will be the narrators of the show and the order in which information will be presented: "The show is about four teenagers, around the ages of fourteen to seventeen who travel around the world. In each show they travel to two cities. When they arrive in the city they will first talk about the cities history and what it is like now in the present." The student also uses the example of Paris as the subject for one show. The student uses complex sentences and transitions (such as "When they arrive in the city . . . . ," "For example . . . .") to tie points together and lead the reader through the essay.

6. Sample "Excellent" Response

Dear Network president,

Hello! I am a young teenager and I think that teenagers these days would like to see something educational. I

think a good idea for a t.v. show would be "Great Cities of the World. ¶For example, one episode could be about Chicago and tell famous places you could visit. One place could be the Sears Tower in which a camera could show people going up in an elevator and then seeing the view of downtown Chicago. ¶Another place the t.v. show could go to is the Shed Aquarium. In it are many types of ocean life that interesting to see up close. They could also go to the art museum and look at famous paintings. ¶Just for fun, the show could go to F.A.O. Schwartz, a large toy store with many toys you can play with. As a matter of fact, you could just go shopping period. Chicago is known for its many stores ¶Then you could take a trip to a restaurant such as Ed Debivic's or Planet Hollywood, just to spice up the show a bit. ¶Now that I've explained where to go in Chicago, I'll tell you a little more about the set-up of the show. I think that you should have a host who is young, around fiftheen, energetic, and a spunky personality. She or he could act as the tour guide and show the viewers around each city. She could also explain the city's trademark's, such as the Sears Tower. I think that if you use a young person, it would attract young viewers.

¶ And last of all, I think the camera should look at the city as if it was viewer's eyes. For example, when you look around, you see things as you would see them, as if you were really there in Chicago, sight-seeing.

¶ Well, I hope you enjoy my input and put it into consideration. I'll be looking forward to seeing a new t.v. show about "Great Cities of the World."

The "Excellent" rating was given to 2 percent of the responses to this topic, in which students used detail and development across the response. The "Excellent" response shown above describes an entire episode of a television series in detail. The student includes such details as how the camera would move: "One place could be the Sears Tower in which a camera could show people going up in an elevator and then seeing the view of downtown Chicago." He or she describes a wide variety of sights in Chicago with suggestions for how to present them. Points such as "I think the camera should look at the city as if it was the viewer's eyes" enable the reader to visualize the show. This student shows good control of language; occasional minor errors do not interfere with meaning. (Note: The "¶" symbols in the sample are paragraph signs and reflect symbols placed in the text by the student.)

Conclusion

The scoring guides used in the NAEP 1998 Writing Assessment set six possible levels of writing performance for students, from "Unsatisfactory" to "Excellent." Among 8th-graders who wrote on the "TV Show" informative writing topic, 3 percent were rated "Unsatisfactory," 13 percent were rated "Insufficient," 40 percent were rated "Uneven," 34 percent were rated "Sufficient," 8 percent were rated "Skillful," and 2 percent were rated "Excellent."

Scoring guides, or "rubrics," are a widely used means of ensuring objective scoring for student work that requires a judgement of quality. Teachers working with scoring guides in the classroom can use the guides not only to evaluate student work but also to explain to students where their work needs improvement.[4]

Endnotes

[1] pp. 5–11, National Assessment Governing Board. *Writing framework and specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC: Author. Web address: ***http://www.nagb.org/pubs/writing.pdf***

[2] The three topics are available in *The NAEP 1998 Writing Report Card*. Additional information is available from the "Sample Questions" section of the NAEP Web Site: ***http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ITMRLS/intro.shtml***

[3] The same basic guide was used for all three writing purposes, with some modifications.

[4] For more information on the use of scoring guides or rubrics, see Moskal, Barbara M. Scoring Rubrics: What, When and How? *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(3). ***http://ericae.net/pare/getvn.asp?v=7&n=3***
The ERIC Clearinghouse has a discussion of rubrics, a bibliography, and additional links at:
http://ericae.net/faqs/rubrics/scoring_rubrics.htm

For Further Information

The NAEP 1998 Writing Report Card, NCES 1999–486, is the complete report. Single copies are available free

from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794–1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web: ***http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/***

Two additional *NAEPfacts*, *Scoring of Fourth-Grade Narrative Writing* (NCES 2000–495), and *Scoring of Twelfth-Grade Persuasive Writing* (NCES 2000–488), are also available. Single copies are available free from ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794–1398. Copies may also be obtained over the World Wide Web: ***http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/***

NAEPfacts briefly summarize findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The series is a product of the National Center for Education Statistics, Gary Phillips, Acting Commissioner, and Peggy Carr, Associate Commissioner for Education Assessment. This issue of *NAEPfacts* was prepared by Sheida White of NCES and Alan Vanneman of the Education Statistics Services Institute, based on previously published material.

To order NAEP publications, call toll free 1–877–4ED–Pubs (1–877–433–7827), TTY/TDD 1–877–576–7734; E-mail: edpubs@inet.ed.gov
Internet: ***http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html***

The NCES World Wide Web Home Page is: ***http://nces.ed.gov/***

The NAEP World Wide Web Home Page is: ***http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/***

United States
Department of Education
ED Pubs
8242–B Sandy Court
Jessup, MD 20794–1398

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use, $300

Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of Education
Permit No. G–17

First Class

40695
JOYA HARIHARAN
C/O LIBRARY
NCSTL
1929 KENNY RD
COLUMBUS OH 43210